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## **Welcome to the Montana Primary Care Office (MT-PCO) News**

This newsletter is intended to communicate information to CHCs, RHCs, NHSC sites and other partners regarding shortage designation activities, NHSC, and J-1 activities and other matters of interest to partners. We welcome your input and recommendations regarding content.

### **National Health Service Corps – Updates from Director Rebecca Spitzgo**

The Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) [implemented organizational changes](#) to the Bureau of Clinician Recruitment and Service (BCRS) in September 2010. The changes will reduce fragmentation and overlap while establishing an increased emphasis on policy and program development, external communication and outreach, customer service and support. As part of the realignment, day-to-day operations for the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) State Loan Repayment Program (SLRP) transitioned from HRSA's Bureau of Health Professions to BCRS on Friday, October 1, 2010.

BCRS coordinates the recruitment and retention of health professionals in underserved communities and supports efforts to build more integrated and sustainable health care systems. BCRS offers scholarship and loan repayment assistance programs for individuals committed to working in communities with a shortage of health care professionals. These programs include: the National Health Service

Corps (NHSC) Programs, the Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program, the Nursing Scholarship Program, the Faculty Loan Repayment Program, and the Native Hawaiian Health Scholarship Program.



Photo of Capital, August 2010, by John Schroeck

### **Join the NHSC & Pay Back Your Student Loans**

- \$50,000  
2 Years of Service
- \$145,000  
5 Years of Service
- Total Debt  
[6 or More Years of Service](#)

## Follow the path to find your pot of NHSC Gold



Typical MT Road to the Pot of NHSC Gold, Photo by John Schroeck

The goal of the NHSC is to expand access to health care services and improve the health of people who live in urban and rural areas where health care is scarce. The NHSC recruits a variety of primary care, dental, and mental health providers who are dedicated to serve communities in need.

National Health Service Corps members are required to practice full-time or part-time for at least two years in a NHSC approved site. Approved sites are located across the country in Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs).

Corps members are required to engage in clinical practice of the profession for which they were awarded a NHSC loan repayment award, at their approved site.

Many types of health care facilities are NHSC-approved sites. About half of Corps members serve in federally supported health centers. Other approved sites are rural and Indian Health Service clinics, public health department clinics, hospital-affiliated primary care practices, managed care networks, prisons, and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement sites.

*See if the NHSC will work for you...*

### 1. Check Eligibility Criteria

**Review the checklist to see if you meet the basic requirements:**

- I am a U.S. citizen or national
- My specialty is one of the following:
  - Physician (MD or DO)
  - Dentist (general or pediatric)
  - Nurse Practitioner (primary care)
  - Certified Nurse-Midwife
  - Physician Assistant
  - Dental Hygienist
  - Psychologist (health service)
  - Licensed Clinical Social Worker
  - Psychiatric Nurse Specialist
  - Marriage and Family Therapist
  - Licensed Professional Counselor
- I am licensed to practice in the state in which I will serve as a Corps member.
- I have unpaid government or commercial loans for school tuition, reasonable educational expenses and reasonable living expenses, segregated from all other debts (that is, not consolidated with non-educational loans).
- I currently work or am applying to work in a facility that is:
  - A NHSC-approved facility, or
  - Located in a Health Professional Shortage Area, and is applying to become a NHSC approved site

If you are not yet working in an approved site, go to step 2 to find a job or to see how your site can apply to become an approved site.

### 2. Find a Job / View NHSC Approved Sites

In order to successfully apply to the NHSC, you will need to provide verification that you have a job at an approved site, or that you have an employment contract to start work at an approved site within 30

days of receiving a NHSC loan repayment award.

- [Find jobs](#) currently available at NHSC-approved sites.
- Find out if your current work site is a [NHSC-approved site](#).
- If you are currently working in a Health Professional Shortage Area, check to see if your site can [apply](#) to become a NHSC-approved site.

### 3. [Apply Online](#)

Create an account and complete the [online application](#). [Download and review the full Application Checklist and Instructions](#) to help you complete your application. Be sure to have your NHSC-approved site's name and address, which you will need to complete the online application.

### 4. [Submit Documentation](#)

[Download and review the full Application Checklist and Instructions](#) to identify the additional documentation that may be required.

5. [Contact PCO for technical Assistance at 406-444-3934 or \[jschroeck@mt.gov\]\(mailto:jschroeck@mt.gov\)](#)

## NHSC Vacancy Listing Instructions

Health centers can update their vacancy lists at any time. In order to maximize opportunities for recruitment, it is in the best interests of the health center to ensure this vacancy list is accurate and current.

Health centers submit a vacancy list with their NHSC R&R Assistance application and may update their vacancy list through the NHSC's Recruitment, Training, and Support Center (RTSC) at 1-877-313-1823. The NHSC vacancy list is posted on the NHSC Opportunity List Web site

<http://nhscjobs.hrsa.gov/> and is for use not only by NHSC clinician participants, but by any clinician who visits the NHSC site.

## 2010-2011 MT State Loan Repayment Program (MT-SLRP)

The 2010-2011 MT-SLRP cycle began July 1, 2010 for submission of applications. Eligible professionals include: Nurse Practitioners, Physician Assistants, Certified Nurse Midwives, Dentist, Dental Hygienist and Mental Health Professionals including Licensed Clinical Social Workers, Psychiatric Nurse Specialist, Marriage and Family Counselor, Health Service Psychologist and Licensed Professional Counselors.

For More Information about MT-SLRP  
Please contact:

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(406)683-2790  
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## Proposed Montana J-1 Visa Waiver Guidelines to be Released for Public Comment

The Montana J-1 Visa Waiver guidelines are under revision. The new guidelines will be released in the near future for public comment.

The purpose of the Montana J-1 Visa Waiver Program is to improve access to quality health care in underserved communities of Montana by sponsoring international medical graduates holding J-1 visas. The Montana J-1 program is one of the recruitment tools offered to communities by MT PCO. Montana's J-1 program is designed to be consistent with other laws, regulations, health care programs and policies of the State of Montana, the United States Department of State (DOS), and the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

The J-1 visa requirement specifies that, exchange students are subject to the two year home residency requirement unless they receive a J-1 Visa Waiver under five applicable grounds including a request by a United States Government Agency or a State Department of Health; this is known as a J-1 Visa Waiver.

The Immigration and Nationality Act is the law that governs the admission of all foreign nationals to the United States. For the part of the law about the foreign residence requirement, please see INA § 212e and INA § 214. The Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] discusses the foreign residence requirement for exchange visitors at 8 CFR § 212.7.

It is important to note that a waiver is not a visa and does not confer the right to work. The waiver only authorizes the applicant to remain in the United States rather than comply with the two-year home residency requirement. In order to legally work, the J-1 physician must also successfully apply for a H1B visa.

The new Proposed Montana J-1 Waiver Guidelines are anticipated to be available for review after November 1<sup>st</sup> 2010 online at:  
<http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/PHSD/Primary-Care/primary-care-j-1info.shtml>

## Shortage Designations

### Current Pending HPSA Designations

- West Yellowstone PC HPSA RSA
- Deerlodge MUP
- Powell County MUA
- Big Horn Dental Health
- Mineral Dental Health
- Ravalli Dental Health Low Income

These applications are currently being review by the Shortage Designation Office, HRSA. For more information

about shortage designations please visit: <http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/shortage/>

## PCO Contact Information

As always, if you need additional information about the NHSC, shortage designations or foreign medical graduates, please don't hesitate to contact me at the address or telephone number listed below:



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